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ZNY CCCCC ZZH
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FM AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4629
INFO RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 5303
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO PRIORITY 5572
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 0747
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 3580
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 4930
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 0872
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA PRIORITY 3054
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 2367
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHMFISS/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KATHMANDU 000179

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/25/2017

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SUBJECT: INDO-NEPAL BORDER TOWN SOUNDS OFF ON MAOISTS

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Classified By: Ambassador James F. Moriarty. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

Summary

11. (C) In a visit to the Terai border town Nepalgunj January 19, government officials told Emboffs that Maoist activity had stopped in the region and that the government would now solve the problems. The police were struggling to win public approval and noted that now was the time to remind the Maoists there should be no more extortion. Local citizens painted a darker picture, describing lives lived in fear of the Maoists, and a lack of faith that the combatants being housed in cantonments were authentic.

A Positive Spin from Government Officials

12. (C) During a January 19 visit to the Terai border town of Nepalgunj in Western Nepal, Emboffs heard from Immigration Official Krishna Adhikary that the problems created by the Maoist insurgency were going to be solved by the government. "They have stopped activity here," he continued, adding that the problem was "almost solved." Adhikary, who formerly worked in Bhutanese refugee camps in Eastern Nepal, noted that Maoists had extorted refugees in the camps, but said they had not recruited the camp residents. A postal official said that the Maoists had created "only a little trouble for my family," explaining, "They only asked for money." Regarding upcoming constituent assembly elections, Chief District Officer Narendra Raj Sharma said he thought they could be free and fair if UN observers and human rights organizations worked "hand in hand" to stop problems. A code of conduct should be implemented, and the political parties should follow "democratic ethics" and be encouraged to have a healthy competition, he underlined.

Police Need to Regain the Confidence of the Public

13. (C) Zonal Senior Superintendent of Police Parshuram Khatri described problems that the police were having regaining the confidence and trust of the public. "These are

sensitive times," he said, noting that the Maoists were fighting with the police in order to make them look bad and garner public support for themselves. "The police are isolated," he lamented, suggesting that "we need to show the public that we are part of society." Asked by Emboff if the government had told the police not to interfere with the Maoists, he denied that the government had given them any such directive. "The police aren't concerned with donations," he said, referring to Maoist extortion, "but we have to remind (the Maoists) now that there will be no more of that."

Fear of the Maoists Abides

14. (C) Bhawani Rana, President of local anti-trafficking NGO SAATHI, claimed that Maoists were still extorting, kidnapping and intimidating the locals. "People still fear them," she said. "After they are separated from their arms, the people will rebel," she assured Emboffs. Tankanath Poudel, a local driver and entrepreneur, also thought many people still feared the Maoists. Although Maoists had entered the Interim Parliament, he said, combatants at the lower level did not agree with their leaders, so they made no changes at the local level. Regarding the recent conflict and unrest in Nepalgunj, Poudel suggested that the Maoists might have been behind it. The Maoists had placed illiterate, unqualified people in the Interim Parliament, Poudel warned, and asserted that the cantonments were full of children and "fake Maoists." "That is why the people still fear the 'real Maoists' who aren't in the camps," he observed.

Comment

15. (C) Government officials we spoke with were the least critical of the Maoists. While most of the officials

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conceded that they had witnessed Maoist extortion, none expressed a great deal of concern over it. The knowledge that the Maoists would be in positions of power soon likely kept them from being overly critical. We suspect that the citizens Emboffs spoke with were more candid about the threat the Maoists continue to pose to local government and the people of Nepalgunj. If the Maoists do not change their ways, there may indeed be a spate of retribution in which they are not the leaders, but the targets of public ire.

MORIARTY